1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

grain in her mortar or working in her garden near by. On market days she takes the produce of the family's fields to the town to sell. If she has young children, she cares for them while she does her other work, but when they are old enough, they help her about the house if they are girls, or, if boys, go with their father to the garden. From time to time, when house repairs are needed or there are implements to be mended, the man spends a day at home getting these odd jobs done; otherwise only serious illness in the family keeps him from his fields.

The times for meals have not varied since the days when Moreau de St. Mery described the eating-habits of the slaves.[9] In addition to the mid-morning repast, the only other meal is that eaten after the man returns from his field, this being the largest of the day. A wife does not sit down with her husband, but usually eats earlier with her small children and holds herself ready to serve him upon his return, when, if he is alone, she remains to tell him the day's gossip. Visitors are often present, for peasant etiquette demands that all comers be offered food, and, as one Haitian expressed it, "The peasant would kill you for the insult if you did not share your meal with him." Bedtime, as might be expected, is early.

On Sundays and on the days of festivals this routine is interrupted, when, if the occasion is of sufficient importance and the habitation is not too far from town, the peasant and his family attend mass. On Saturday nights there is usually a *vodun* dance, when the early hour for retirement is forgotten and all-night festivities precede Sunday's rest. On such days the principal meal is eaten at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, and all the adults share it together, while at one side the children are fed from the dishes of their parents in response to the insistent repetition of the demand "*Ba'm pa'm* — give me my portion." *

* This is an example of the elision characteristic of Haitian Créole, it being abbreviated from *Ba moin part moin ou*, in French, *Donnez-moi ma part*.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

857 hide-and-seek and enjoy story-telling sessions, when the tales of 'Ti Malice and Bouki are recounted. Still older ones make drums out of jars and "arrange a dance." Little girls play with dolls made for them by the older children, while boys with sticks for horses organize themselves into "armies" with their
852 seniors as officers. When a child's teeth fall out, a minor ceremony is performed. As each tooth is detached, the child throws it on the roof of the mother's house, saying:

[539]

"Rat, rat, rat,	"Rat, rat, rat,
M'jet' yun bel' 'ti dent	I give you a nice little
ba 'ou,	tooth,
Ba'm yun vieille dent."	Give me an old tooth."

871 At this same time a beginning of formal education is made, especially if the child lives in the town or near enough to it to
872 allow him to reach one of the schools there. These schools are under both secular and Catholic auspices, and in them the pupil is instructed in the rudiments of European education, learning to read and write and to do simple problems in arith-
873 metic. If he shows proficiency and the means of his family permit, he may go on to a secondary school at Port-au-Prince or some other center; in the main, however, this schooling is all he ever receives, if he is permitted this much.

861 It is not to be supposed that a child is allowed to grow up
593 without learning how to conduct himself in accordance with
602 the traditional code of Haitian behavior, for the punishment that follows departures from this code is always both prompt and extremely painful, beating with sticks being the mode of correction most often employed. The mechanisms of education and control operate the more effectively because they are exercised by a fairly large group of persons, which includes not only the father and mother of the child, but also his grandparents, his uncles and aunts on both sides of the family, and
603 his older brothers, sisters, and cousins. Less restraint is exer-
593 cised before grandparents than other relations, for while there
604

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

are no customary playmate or joking relationships between grandparents and grandchildren, a man would rather go to his grandparents when in trouble than to his parents or uncles, because of the greater indulgence they show him.

At about the age of seven or eight the children's play-life is invaded by the serious work which they must increasingly assume. According to their sex, they are instructed by father or mother, each parent teaching the child the work he will be most occupied with as he matures. For some children, naturally, this education is deferred longer than for others, but, as a rule, boys of four or five may be seen playing about the field "helping" father by bringing him a leaf with which to light his cigarette, or "hoeing" in company with him, while girls are early permitted the pleasure of accompanying their mothers to market. By observing his father at work and by helping in small tasks the boy gradually learns how to do a man's work, until at about the age of fifteen he himself can cultivate a garden. Two or three years later he is given a field of his own and seed with which to sow it. The produce from it he brings to his mother to sell for him, and she keeps what money it brings, so that he will have his savings when he wishes to marry. Little girls, for whom acquaintance with the techniques of selling in the market is desirable, are given small articles to dispose of, and the proceeds belong to them, though some mothers demand an accounting from the young tradeswomen as a further measure of training. A woman also teaches her daughter to sew, to cook, and to wash and iron, instruction which is continued until a girl, ready to be given in marriage, is able to manage all of a woman's work.

If a family can afford the expense, children begin to be prepared for their first communion at eight or ten years of age; but members of poor families must wait until the money can be found — which means that some classes of candidates include grown men and women. At about the customary age for confirmation the children are informed of the family vodun

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

595 533 or if women who share the same lover meet in the market place, quarreling is invariably heard; or if one of them sings *point* — derisive songs — against the other and goes so far as to name the object of derision, fighting and court action follow.

58 595 684 Though many cases of *plaçage* are the result of affairs between young people which result in conception, it is essential in any event that the consent of the families of the man and the woman concerned be obtained to give the mating social validity. When the union is once entered upon, divorce occurs only with the abandonment or mistreatment of the woman, or her infidelity, for in these *plaçage* matches, the moral support of her family makes a man reluctant to send his wife away without ample justification. When a man does divorce a *placée* wife for reasons of infidelity, she may either go to another man or return to the home of her parents, where she supports herself. If after a period of years she has not established a household with another man, it often happens that her husband takes her back. Most frequently, however, where children have been born to a mating, a woman's infidelity is punished merely by beating; and proof that a wife is a wife whether or not she is legally "married" is offered by the Haitian man in this fact that a *placée* is beaten for this and less serious reasons as readily as a legal wife. Prompt [1154] action is taken against the adulterer, which, though it may on occasion be as drastic as murder, generally takes the form of [848] recourse to magic charms. Women who carry on illicit relationships take all care, therefore, to guard unceasingly against the birth of offspring.

595 593 Many men, at least, hold that a man is often much closer to a *placée* than to a legal wife, for the former is more attentive and less demanding than the wife with her legally assured status and permanence of tenure. Thus it comes about that [454] *placée* spouses are frequently given generous money gifts, to be saved for the future of their children, while as a man grows older he may take up his residence with a *placée* wife, where

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

he is assured of more solicitous care from her and more deferential treatment from her children. And though when this has occurred his "legal" wife may at his death come with a justice of the peace to claim his body and his effects, this move is anticipated, so that what he has given the *placée* wife and her children is usually well out of the way. "Often they find only the four walls of the house."

A certain number of unmarried men result from this system of plural matings, some of whom remain single by preference, particularly in the cities, where the incidence of homosexuality far exceeds that found in the country. In Mirebalais itself, when the final withdrawal of the American Marines from Haiti was being celebrated, a dance called *manuba*, significantly enough the only one held indoors, was one in which male dancers danced together in couples. The sexual problem of the younger unmarried men is more often solved by means of liaisons with married women, though this has its dangers in the countryside, where the movements of every individual are known and the least tendency to unsanctioned social behavior is soon the subject for widespread gossip. Prostitutes are found everywhere, and they are by no means visited by unmarried men alone. On the whole, sex "adventures" are more indulged in by men than women, even allowing for the tendency of some women to have affairs with youths. A belief widely held, that plural wives tend so to exhaust the virility of a man that he must seek "remedies" of a magical nature from the priests of the *vodun* cult and from sorcerers, must also be mentioned. Frigidity is a principal cause for female homosexuality, and, because of a wife's reluctance to satisfy her husband, it not infrequently happens that she is sent back to her parents, where she may seek out other women. The most prevalent Haitian attitude toward homosexuality in either sex, it may be remarked, is one of derision rather than vindictiveness, as the term applied to effeminate men, *commères*, may suggest.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

595 593 671 The fact that Haitian law recognizes only monogamy introduces numerous overtones into the daily life of the people. If a church-wed wife discovers that her husband makes periodic visits to another woman, whether *placée* or not, serious quarreling between the legal wife and her husband follows. The "wife" may refuse to give food to her husband or to speak to him, and will upbraid him before their children, calling him *vagabond* — a strong word of opprobrium to the Haitian — and other terms which her facile tongue readily finds at hand. The status of the children under this dual family system is another reflection of the values it engenders. And though the account of this given in Mirebalais represents a folk-reaction rather than official procedure — for according to officials in the capital it does not exist in Haitian law — its value as a living belief which gives insight into the relevant attitudes outweighs its possible lack of validity in a legal sense.

858 In Mirebalais it is held that there are what may be spoken of as three classes of offspring. The first, which may be termed "natural" children, are those born to a man by his *placée* wife or wives before his Church marriage, or to a *placée* woman whose mating with him was later legalized by the rites of Church and State. The second class, the "legitimate" children, comprises those born to couples married in the strict legal sense of the word. Finally, a third category consists [858] of those who may be called "illegitimate" children, and includes all the offspring of any *placée* spouse of a man taken by him after his Church marriage, or children of any of his earlier *placée* wives born subsequent to this marriage. None of these classes of children are at any special social disadvantage, and all not only inherit the African deities of their father, but must also fulfill their spiritual obligations toward him after his death by wearing mourning and performing all other required rituals.

582 641 858 859 861 Legally, however, the matter is different, for only the children born to a marriage recorded by the justice of the peace

1: Herskovits B-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

belong to the father, who, in turn, is the legally recognized father of all the offspring of his wife unless he divorces her — something which, because of Church regulations, occurs but rarely. Children born outside legal marriage have no right to the name of their father. Such a one is entered under his mother's name in the record of births, though he may and often does take his father's name in school or later in life, this ultimately becoming the name by which he is known and which he hands on to his children. It is in the inheritance of the father's property that children born of the various types of matings are said to be most strongly differentiated, though it was particularly with this method of distributing heritable goods reported in Mirebalais that officials in the capital disagreed. The assertion is made that while the children of a "legal" wife inherit three quarters of the estate, and the other "natural" children receive one fourth, the "illegitimate" offspring have no legal right to any of the dead man's property. They must either be provided for by their father before his death or be aided on occasion by a natural brother who has inherited from their common father and feels a moral obligation toward these children of their father. Children of plural wives call each other by the terms "brother" and "sister," and in some instances they get on fairly well together. More generally, however, their attitudes toward one another are colored by those of their mothers, so that verbal if not physical encounters may take place when they meet.

Where, as perhaps in the majority of cases, there is a monogamous union, "legal" or "*placée*," cemented by mutual affection and mutual interest in the future of the children, life goes on calmly. Each spouse performs the tasks allotted by custom, and the children are reared in an atmosphere which varies with the fortunes and temperaments of those who make up the household. Fathers are said to prefer their daughters, and mothers their sons, among their children, but for this the Haitian has no explanation other than the phrase: "This is natural."

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

591 596 428 rarest of instances, and only by fixed legal procedure, since mere verbal denial of family rights cannot deprive a person of his inheritance.

594 432 434 454 Within the immediate family it is the duty of the man to procure food for his wife and children. When his fields have been harvested, the produce is taken to the house and given to the wife, who retains a portion of it for the needs of the household and sells the surplus at the market, using the money to buy clothing and other necessaries for her husband, her children, and herself. A part of the sum she receives may be used to purchase animals to be used for transport, food, or breeding-purposes; and whatever money is left over is saved, particularly if a desirable plot of ground is available, or a mass and ceremony for the ancestors or promised rituals for the gods are in prospect. The woman, who is held to be more thrifty than the man, is thus the banker of the family. Her opinion is prized by her husband, and though a man has the legal right to dispose of a horse or a cow or his own land as he desires, in most households nothing would be done until the wife was consulted. It is true that quarrels often arise concerning family funds held by the wife, especially when a man questions the accounting given him, or on occasion when he wants money to bet on a cock-fight or for drinking or other personal needs whose cost he does not care to have reviewed. But for many men the problem is quite well solved by the expedient of deducting a sum from his earnings without telling his wife that she has not been given the full amount.

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596 It is only in relatively small matters that the membership of a household acts as a self-determining unit. In affairs of greater moment the extended family must figure, for despite the informality of its organization — at least as manifested in Mirebalais — and its lack of legal sanction, its power, especially as lodged in the old folk, is none the less real. It is because of this that it is said: "The peasant consults his elders about everything he does." When a transaction of some im-

L: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

796 787 [794] was there. To bring him down, a *hunsi* holding water and a candle at once began slowly to dance under him, fixing him with the usual unvarying stare. After some five minutes the candle and water were quickly given to those near by, and in a flash the possessed one was safely on the ground, candle in hand, pouring water before the center pole and the drums, and dancing magnificently.

796 793 787 593 Shortly after midnight the head of the family and his wife returned to the scene of the dance, the explanation given for this return revealing the native conception of the power of the *hungan*. Before his arrival, it was said he had been told of the quarrel; hence on his way to the dance he passed the *barrière* of the house of the family head, though he did not stop to speak with him. Prior to leaving his home, however, he was supposed to have performed a rite which, soon after he began drumming at the dance, so affected the children of the family head that they became possessed and at once ran to the *tonnelle*. Since their children were present, the father and mother were forced to come, and this was followed by a reconciliation of those who had quarreled. To make doubly sure that the *loa* would take no offense, however, another dance which formally ended the *service* was given jointly by all members of the family several weeks later.

796 787 One phase of the ceremonial always encountered, but unusually frequent on this occasion, was the salutation of the assembled company by the *loa*. One woman, possessed by Ogun, greeted all present first by shaking hands with wrists crossed in the customary manner, and then kissing each person on both cheeks. Another, possessed by Ossange, took the neckerchief from about his neck and wiped the faces of all those present, paying particular attention to the drummers. The son of the family head was again possessed by Gede as at the *service*, and his greeting to the assembled company was especially dramatic. His possession took the form of a hysteri-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

769 17 a *mangé* is given, and that evening, when the feast ends, dances are held. Two or three *tonnelles* are provided, the most important of these being the one where the Martinique cycle, the social dances most beloved by the ancestors, is danced. In one of the remaining two a European *bal* is held, and in the other are the *vodun* dancers. Thus even in connection with a commemorative Church mass for the dead the *mangé morts* and the dancing of African dances are included.

595 177 178 [554] The institution of plural marriage, which is socially recognized though not legally sanctioned, is obviously African. Though the *placée* is held in respect and her place in society carries no reproach for herself or her children because of any connotation of immorality, it is of significance for an understanding of the manner of cultural change that prestige in marriage goes with the monogamic union blessed by the Church, and that the "wife"—the woman who is addressed as "Madame"—holds definitely higher social position than the *placée*. Officially the Haitian State is in accord with the position of the Church and recognizes only the European monogamic marriage. Socially, however, African plural marriage is not only tolerated but accepted as a matter of course, and in those instances where plural marriage takes on its most exuberant form, as when men of position have as many as six or seven *placées* in addition to a legal wife, its very size tends to give such a family group, or at least its head, the enviable esteem of his fellow-citizens.

17 [593] 606 [583] Within the family, the deference toward older members and the duties and attitudes toward parents-in-law are African both in form and in spirit. The exaction of guarantees from a young man before marriage, and the necessity of his proving to the family of his fiancée that he can support her, are perhaps in their generalized form universals, but as found in Haiti show once more a retention of specific aboriginal traditions. On the other hand, such aspects of marriage as the formal *lettre de demand* sent when a match is arranged, or the [584]

1: Herskovits E-4, 6 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

fact that a family will often strike out for itself, deserting the parental home, show a European independence foreign to native African thought. Yet the arrangement of meal-times, and the fact that a wife rarely eats with her husband, are African, as are the modes of correction, especially the feeling that flogging with a stick is the best disciplinary method. Indeed, the characteristic snap of the fingers employed by the Haitian to indicate a beating is exactly that which is used in Dahomey to signify beheading! In the attitude toward children African traditions have been warped by European custom, which has introduced a certain hardness of feeling that, whatever the cost, children must be brought in line with social convention, together with a resulting harshness of treatment that is anything but African.

Another important facet of Haitian life in which the effect of contact is telling includes art and recreational activities. Perhaps because of the conditions of slavery, or the difficulties of life after independence had been attained, much of these forms of African tradition has been lost, not to be replaced by corresponding borrowings from European sources. Wood-carving, an outstanding element in the æsthetic life of West Africa, is almost entirely absent. Near Mirebalais lives a man who can carve a pipe in the likeness of a human face, but there is no similarity between the products of his craft and West African figurines or masks, and he is thought of as an unusual person whose carving is an interesting but not socially significant avocation. It was stated, though without adequate corroboration, that before the Marine occupation Mirebalais boasted *vodun* drums on which heads "like the ones on these pipes" had been carved. Today the only form of decorative work in wood to be seen is the scroll-work designs which act as ventilating devices over doorways. They are done with the jigsaws of the carpenters, and no fertility of conception or felicity in composition marks these artistically crude efforts.

Other African crafts, which, though essentially utilitarian

2: Courlander 8-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

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That friend there, he is not a friend for me!
That friend there, he is not a friend for me, treason!
I pass his house, he gives me a chair to sit in!
He goes around speaking bad words about me!

Or again, you may hear:

Nègˈ nwè, com çà ou yé, *ago-é*!
Nègˈ nwè, com çà ou yé!
Y'ap manjé avé ou!
Y'ap boè avé ou!
Y'ap coupé lavie ou débò! [Ex. 95]

Black man, like this you are, *ago-é*!
Black man, like this you are!
He will eat with you,
He will drink with you,
He will cut the life out of you!

A man regards his child's godfather as his closest friend outside the family circle. Should either of the two friends fail to fulfill the high standard of behavior demanded by their tie, the other may express disappointment and recrimination, as in this song:

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Compè à moin compè ou malhonnête!
Ou malhonnête compè compè à moin compè ou malhonnête!
Premier pitit moin faˈm ba ou batizé!
Malheur rivéˈm nan hountor ou pas vini wè moin!

My comrade, comrade, you are dishonest!
You are dishonest comrade, my comrade, comrade, you are dishonest!
I gave you my first child to baptize!
When misfortune comes to me in the hounfor, you do not come to see me!

Sometimes even the most domestic of grievances are aired in public through means of song:

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Isamise oh!
Ste Hélène oh!
Isamise oh!
Ste Hélène oh!
Trois paire soulettes marˈm ba moin!
Malediction prend moin! [Ex. 96]

Isamise, oh!
St. Hélène, oh!
Isamise, oh!
St. Hélène, oh!
Three pairs of shoes my husband gave me!
This misfortune has taken me!

2: Courlander 9-5 (1937-1964) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

Yo dit'm gainyain largent séré, oh vrai!
Yo mist' conplotaille oh lâ sou dos moin!
Oh yo mist' conplotaille oh lâ sou dos moin!
Fai'm payé largent, *hon!*
Mandé Bondieu pou' nou wè li, an! [Ex. 170]

Disaster descends on my yard!
If I work in the yard there
They say I have hidden money, in truth!
They plot behind my back!
Oh, they plot behind my back!
Make me pay money, *hon!*
I ask God to see it.

Another theme that runs deeply through Haitian life is the need for a mother. In a society where placage is normal and where fathers frequently are transient, the mother has been the stabilizing factor in family life. A *plaçée* family might see the father only at certain times of the year. If he is a farmer, it will usually be when he comes to work his gardens; then he will move on to other gardens and possibly to another family elsewhere. The loss of a mother, under these conditions, is felt very deeply. Many Haitian songs, in various moods, emphasize the role of the mother in the house. Some of them are gay, like this one, with an undercurrent of sadness:

Oh dépis manman moin fai moin,
M'pas jamais wè manman moin!
Waille waille waille waille!
Waille waille waille waille!
M'pas conné manman moin!
Zandolite fai'm!
Mabouya fai'm!
Zandolite fai'm!
Mabouya fai'm! [Ex. 171]

Oh, since my mother made me,
I've never seen my mother!
Waille waille waille waille! *
Waille waille waille waille!
I do not know my mother!
A *zandolite* made me!
A *mabouya* made me!
A *zandolite* made me!
A *mabouya* made me!

The *zandolite* and *mabouya* to which the song refers are small lizards which constantly skitter about on the rocks and in the trees, as though they have no home. The metaphor is clear.

One more song on this subject stresses the importance of having a mother as compared, say, to an unreliable man:

Ma crié,
Oh qua'm perdi manman moin ma rélé!
Ma rélé,
Oh qua'm perdi manman moin crié!
Qua'm perd' un garçon moin join' l'eau' oh!

* Exclamation.

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Qua'n pend' an garçon main join' l'aut' ah!
Ma rélé,
Oh qua'n perdit manman main ma crié! [Ex. 102]

I cried,
Oh, when I lost my mother I cried!
I cried,
Oh, when I lost my mother I cried!
When I lost a man I found another, ah!
When I lost a man I found another, ah!
I cried,
Oh, when I lost my mother I cried!

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Protest or complaint songs are sometimes directed against no one in particular but simply call the attention of listeners to the singer's misfortunes. In many such songs the president or one of the deities is mentioned by name. The singer in this way implicitly places responsibility for help. In the following song, one complains of hunger, another theme that runs throughout Haitian folklore and Haitian life.

Rwa! Président qui voyé rélé'm!
Main pas bwè main pas mangé!
M'pas bwè main pas mangé!
Oh m'pas bwè main pas mangé!
Président qui voyé rélé'm rwa!
M'pas bwè main pas mangé! [Ex. 103]

Rwa! * The President sends for me!
I haven't drunk, I haven't eaten!
I haven't drunk, I haven't eaten!
Oh, I haven't drunk, I haven't eaten!
The President sends for me, *rwa!*
I haven't drunk, I haven't eaten!

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[976]
[982]

Here the lwa Ogoun Balindjo is called upon to take note of prying, insincere people who come to a person's house, observe what is going on, and go away to gossip:

Ogoun Balindjo
Yo vini gu'dé'm
Pou' y'allé voté ah!
Ogoun Balindjo
Li yé wè bouche yé ah!
Ogoun Balindjo
Pou wè yo vini gu'dé main? [Ex. 104]

Ogoun Balindjo
They came to look at me

* An exclamation.

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I say it belongs to the old man! *Ciyé!* *
It's the old man's thing! *Ciyé!*
I say it's the old man's affair! *Ciyé!*
It's the old man's thing! *Ciyé!*
I say I'll look for it! *Ciyé!*
I'm going to take it! *Ciyé!*
I say it belongs to the old man, *Ciyé!*
It's the old man's thing, *Ciyé!*

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Another burlesque of a quarrel concerns a mother who has sent her daughter down to the river to do the washing. Some question arises as to whether the girl went down to the river at all, or whether she went elsewhere. There is implicit suggestion that the girl may have been at a rendezvous. The mother and the girl argue back and forth:

Main wayé Lanmezi nan dlow,	I sent Lanmezi to the water,
Li pas allé!	She didn't go!
Main wayé Lanmezi nan dlow,	I sent Lanmezi to the water,
Li pas allé!	She didn't go!
Main wayé Lanmezi nan dlow,	I sent Lanmezi to the water,
Li pas allé!	She didn't go!
Main wayé Lanmezi nan dlow,	I sent Lanmezi to the water,
Li pas allé!	She didn't go!
Lanmezi ouè ou té yé?	Lanmezi, where are you?
Li'm té yé!	I was there!
Li'm té yé!	I was there!
Li'm té yé!	I was there!
Li'm té yé!	I was there!
Li'm! [Ex. say]	There!

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Most of the scandal songs are fragmentary and tangent, though clear in implication, like this one:

C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin manman!
C'est pas faute moin!
Gainyain manmo t'ap manché dépi lèmi
Rivo wapé
Gainyain manmo t'ap manché dépi lèmi
Gainyain manmo nin lavwa li,
Pwosé manvèlle ch, an! [Ex. suk]

It wasn't my fault!
It wasn't my fault!
It wasn't my fault!

* Used as an exclamation.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

must pass to an illegitimate child if recognition is accorded. It is likewise strong in its harmony with actual conditions: in the absence of legal marriage among the people, it would have been manifestly unfair to favor a few fortunate children. Dessalines argued that the revolution had legitimized all Haitians; that it was unjust to prevent a child's inheriting from the person who had given him life; and that since all Haitians had come out of slavery and degradation into freedom, no new inequalities should be instituted.[4]

If this law encouraged family life, it weakened marriage both of the civil and religious kind: where was the sense in the expensive luxury of a wedding when children were just as legitimate without it? By conforming to folk practice the Emperor confirmed it. Only the aristocrats disliked his law, for it seemed to make light of one of the distinctions they cherished—the formal wedding. It irked them to have the State place a casual child upon an equal plane with one born after proper marriage.

At still another point the law accorded with living conditions at the time. During the years of fighting many men had been killed, and always the large standing army kept thousands of others away from settled farm life. Home, then, was for a child the abode of his mother—a fact recognized by the law's insistence upon maternal relationship rather than paternity. Such a word as "matriarchate" has no place here; but from the days of Dessalines to modern times, the lowly Haitian thinks of his home primarily as where his mother lives.

As if the advantages of formal wedding were not already sufficiently weakened by this law, other enactments of the empire struck at other phases of marriage. Divorce was permitted for adultery, for incompatibility of temperament or character, and by mutual consent. Such provisions not only broke away completely from Catholic practice, but made getting out of wedlock a casual matter of taking an oath. The complaint of incompatibility need be made by only one spouse; "mutual consent" as a ground for divorce was probably not allowed in 1805 in any other country of the Western World.

Dessalines did not appear to care one whit for the good opinion of white foreigners. It sufficed for him if Haiti endured, whatever Europeans thought of her. Christophe, on the other hand, was extremely sensitive to foreign disapproval. Many of his official acts can

4. According to the testimony of Madiou, *op. cit.*, III, 216.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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the market, the women sit all day in the broiling sun, and in Port-au-Prince at least, sometimes sleep near by for the night, in order to complete their purchases and sales and to get their fill of companionable gossip. They are often accompanied by the youngest of their children, some of whom have to be carried.

Some observers profess to see evidences of a matriarchate among the peasants, for as a general rule the woman attends to the business dealings of the market place, handles the money, directs her children, and manages the household. If the man has more than one placée spouse, complete control of the farm is the woman's during the absence of her man. It is a superficial judgment, however, to speak of the peasant mother as a matriarch. The man owns the land, chooses his women, calls for help at the moment he pleases for preparation of the ground for planting; and when he knows his end to be near, summons all his families and disposes of his property as he sees fit. His decision is final. But he is no more a patriarch than his woman is a matriarch: they are economic partners in a struggle for existence.

By our standards, the woman is inferior to the man not only in rights but in being one spouse of several. He may contract several unions, while she may have only one. She does more steady, if not more actual, physical labor than the man. When he is at home, she must offer him the best of the food. As usual in simple societies, however, the issue rarely arises as to superiority or inferiority of the sexes. Customary behavior is followed without much question.

There is one great contrast between élite and peasant women, in the matter of childbirth. The élite mother takes as much care of herself during pregnancy and parturition as would an American woman in well-to-do circles. The peasant mother, on the contrary, cannot allow herself the luxury of medical attention, nor can she spare the time to rest quietly. Like many so-called "primitive" women, she apparently finds herself little incommoded either by pregnancy or birth. Babies are born frequently in the market place, the mother having come down from the hills only that day with her goods. It is not unusual to hear of the birth of a child in a roadside ditch or in a grove by the path to and from the market town. The care given mother and infant is primitive: the navel cord is cut with a sharp stone or a piece of broken glass; a short rest is thought sufficient before the mother resumes her task. As might be expected, the death rate from infection is high and women age prematurely.

Parents are generally kind to their children, so far as physical

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Parents are generally kind to their children, so far as physical
855 punishment is concerned. The average peasant child can hardly
861 properly be said to be "brought up": he merely grows, eats whatever
152 his family eats or whatever fruits he can pick up, and learns his place in the community as he matures. In anger, parents are likely to use in correction the first thing that comes to hand. There is a surprising callousness to pain among these generally kindly people: they beat their donkeys unmercifully, and strap harness over open sores; they carry chickens, head down and feet tied together and mouths gaping, for miles in the sun; they revel in gory cockfights. If, therefore, a parent is minded to beat his child, he will probably do a thorough
[578] job of it. A peasant woman, pommeling her son with a broomstick, replied to the protests of a white passer-by, "*Li nèg; li pas fait li mal.*" ("He's a Negro; it won't hurt him.") The interference of a stranger in the beating of a wife by her man, armed with a club, was resented by both man and woman as an interference with a purely family quarrel.

831 The concept of sexual continence is lacking among the peasants.
834 Sex, indeed, hardly enters the realm of morality except in connection
864 with adulterous dalliance of one man with another's woman. There is no virtue in abstaining from sex relations when the sexual urge is strong. Mothers tell love stories in all their frank details to their young daughters, and some who care about such matters are adept in all lore connected with stimulating and satisfying a man's desire.[5]
[342] Since huts are small and the whole family sleeps in the same room, children have ample opportunity to observe the sexual life of their parents. If a girl, as a result of her own experiments, has a child born to her, there is no disgrace. Practically every peasant is "illegitimate," so that the term means nothing; a baby will soon be old enough to assist in the work of the home, thus becoming an asset. It is expected that as soon as a youth grows up he will find a mate and begin a family of his own.

241 The family is as important an element of peasant life as formal
931 marriage is unimportant. It is the economic unit. Ever since the days
● 572 of Pétion Haitian economy has been one of small things: even the crops are small subsistence crops of maize, millet, beans, rice, yams, and frequently trees of bananas, plantains, and coffee, which require no particular cultivation. Enough coffee has been produced in Haiti for annual export ever since 1804, but until recent years the beans

5. See Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, pp. 22 ff.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
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have been gathered from trees which grew wild. Both men and women labor, with the work divided according to regular custom between the sexes, the men dominating the scene only in the marketing of coffee.

Nature was opulent enough at the beginning of Haitian independence. The wars had ruined irrigation ditches, sugar refineries, and mechanical equipment, but the soil was still abundantly fertile. But generations of farming by people without knowledge of fertilization or soil conservation have worn out much of the land. Trees have been cut to provide lumber and clearings for more farms; in the rainy seasons torrents have coursed down the mountainsides, washing away soil and exposing the earth to the rays of a tropical sun. Because the country is overpopulated every available acre is put to use, and to overuse, thus still more depleting the land. It is a vicious circle, for the next generation must extract yet more from the earth and so weaken it further. Hard work is the lot of the peasant, therefore, during every month of the year except the dry season. There has never been a formal rotation of crops: a farmer continues to plant the same crop in the same field until the harvest is perceptibly smaller than before. Then he changes to another type of produce. Sooner or later he will allow the land to lie fallow for several years until, by the action of nature or the grazing over it of cattle, it has regained a measure of its fertility.

The strenuous work of clearing fields and preparing them for cultivation is man's job. Since the peasants owned their plots it has almost always been done in coöperation by the men of the neighborhood. What on the American frontier would have been called a "bee" is known in Haiti as a *coumbite*, or *combite*, often carried on as an enterprise of the local *Société Congo*, the informal neighborhood group for mutual aid and fellowship.[6]

A man who has a large job on hand announces a coumbite for any day except Sunday, always a day of rest, and whatever other week-

[6] The word "coumbite" was apparently borrowed from the Spanish part of the island, and from the Spanish word *convidar*, convey. In Colombia "convite" means exactly what "coumbite" means in Haiti: a gathering of peasants to work in common, or else a coöperative society for mutual agricultural self-help.

Professor Herskovits (*Life in a Haitian Valley*, chap. IV) describes the Société Congo in detail. The use of the name "Congo" indicates the African tradition, and is particularly noteworthy in connection with a kind of coöperative work which Herskovits finds particularly Dahomean.